Proverbs as Media for Learning Local Wisdom
Cognitive Semantic Study

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs are one of evidence of human existence framed in culture. It contains many admonitions, exhortations, criticisms, and even implicit prohibitions. This requires cognitive ability to understand and receive messages well. This qualitative descriptive article aims to investigate the meanings of proverbs in Lampung, Indonesia, for learning local wisdom. Using an observation method, this study employed 36 proverbs that can be used as a medium for children to learn language and cultural values. The analysis was carried out by classifying the source domain and target domain with cognitive semantic designs. The findings show that the proverbs contain advice and noble values of the Indonesian culture. The values refer to *Piil Pesengiri* as a local philosophy of Lampung.

Keywords: Cognitive semantics, Local wisdom, Philosophy, Proverbs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional languages have a function as a symbol of regional pride, identity, and as a means of communication within the family and society. Both national and regional languages are dynamic. Language is always experiencing development and changes, both in the form of shifts in meaning and lexical changes. In the Indonesian Language Congress VIII, Asim Gunarwan revealed that language has a very important role in relation to the culture of a society, namely as a means of transmitting that culture from one generation to another. Therefore, the weakening of the language can lead to a decline in the culture of the community concerned. That is, there is a positive correlation between language and cultural resilience (Gunarwan, n.d., p. 115). Lampung language is one of the regional languages in Indonesia which is also starting to show symptoms of being abandoned by its speakers. The Lampung language is now only used by traditional elders in the village, Lampung ethnic people or only used in traditional events. Rarely do we hear people—who live in urban areas in Lampung—using the Lampung language when communicating in crowded places or in public places. This is in line with the opinion of Sumarsono (2011, p. 286, as cited in Rahayu, 2020) which reveals that language gets its share of life, but not from the laws of nature, but by human society and culture itself. According to him, the fate of language is related to its

users and if the language declines or becomes extinct, it is due to the changing circumstances of the speakers.

Culture is an identity for a nation. Thus, it can be said that culture should not be separated from an educational process, both formal and non-formal education. This effort must be made to continue maintaining Lampung culture through the preservation of regional languages because language is one element of culture itself. One form of Lampung culture is the existence of a philosophy of life in the form of *Piil Pesenggiri* which contains life principles that reflect self-respect, honor, and adaptation to immigrants in the Lampung region. *Piil Pesenggiri* consists of five things, including (1) *Pesenggiri*, (2) *Juluk-Adek*, (3) *Nemui Nyimah*, (4) *Nengah Nyappur*, and (5) *Sakai Sambayan* (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya, 2022).

According to the Online Indonesian Dictionary (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2022), proverbs mean (1) 'a group of words or sentences that have a fixed arrangement, usually symbolizing a certain meaning (in proverbs including thimbles, expressions, parables); (2)'a concise, concise expression or sentence containing comparisons, parables, advice, principles of life or rules of conduct'. Proverb's meaning can be seen lexically and culturally. Lexical meaning is the meaning of language elements as symbols of objects, events, and others (Kridalaksana, 2011, p. 149). Djajasudarma (1993, p.

13, as cited in Wahyuni, 2017) stated that lexical meaning can be interpreted as meaning that can stand alone, both in the form of speech and in the form of basic words. Proverbs can also be seen from their cultural meaning, namely the meaning of language that belongs to certain cultural communities. In general, cultural meaning is indicated using symbols or figurative language. Cruse (2000) distinguishes the classification of meaning into two types, namely lexical meaning, and grammatical meaning.

Cruse used a contextual approach that focuses on the concept of the semantic device of the lexical unit which is embodied through its relationship to the actual and potential context (Cruse, 1986, p. 35). Regarding proverbs as a cultural symbol, there have been many studies conducted by previous researchers. Pujiastuti (2017) revealed 29 proverbs contained in customary law which contained the life order of the *Rejang* people. The collected proverbs function as advice, prohibitions, teachings, descriptions of the social order of society. Kurniawan (2018) indicated that proverbs reflect the culture of the users of these proverbs. Sari (2020) found that the Kutai language proverb contains good traits/actions, bad traits/actions, advice, warnings, and satire. Indrawati (2021) conducted research on *Bakumpai* proverbs in the form of proverbs and parables related to the use of the lexicon of animal and plant names. Wati (2022) wrote a thesis about Banjar proverbs as character education based on local wisdom, which highlighted Banjar literary works in the form of proverbs that can be used as a medium for character education based on local wisdom.

The basic principle of the study of cognitive linguistics in the study of language is to link linguistic structures with human cognition (Newman as cited in Fatikhudin, 2018). As we know, language is a medium for humans to communicate and socialize with other humans. Language is the actualization of life experiences that are stored and processed in the cognition space in the human brain. The main study of cognitive semantics lies in the conceptual structure and conceptualization. It can be said that cognitive semantics not only examines literal meaning, but also reveals conceptual systems in the human mind and meaning with language media (Evans & Green, 2006). The meanings contained in each word relate to a conceptualization of human experience (Saeed, 1997). Meaning is a conceptual structure that is the result of human conventions with language as the medium as the actualization of a set of concepts that exist in the brain. Amin (2015) stated that the objective is to understand how the human brain extracts meaning from disparate information and then organized there into interconnected sign form and sign system.

Previous cognitive semantic studies were more about metaphors, structures, patterns, schemata, and others. Kinanti and Rahman (2019), for example, wrote an article which focuses on metaphors in proverbs. This study attempts to describe the diction of plants in metaphorical expressions contained in Indonesian proverbs. Wiradharma and WS (2016) wrote an article which focuses on the use of metaphors in *dangdut* song lyrics that create a deep impression for the audience. Haula and Nur (2019) wrote an article which also discusses the metaphorical side with the object of study in the opinion rubric of daily *Kompas*. Rahardian (2018) wrote an article which has a finding that the concept of the tiger is conceptualized in terms of positive and negative in the human mind of Indonesian proverbs). However, there is no one who specializes in studying the form of Lampung language proverbs as a medium for learning local wisdom. Based on the background of the problem above, this study will focus on the Lampung language proverbs contained in the Lampung-Indonesian Dictionary (Herman, 2017).

2. METHOD

The analysis of the study of proverbs as a medium for learning local wisdom was carried out using a cognitive semantic approach by classifying the source and target domains in Lampung proverbs. This study aims to describe Lampung proverbs that can be used as a medium for learning local wisdom for students. Sudaryanto argues that the method is a way that must be done, implemented, and applied in a study, while the technique is a way of doing, implementing, and applying the method (Sudaryanto, 2015, p. 9). The data obtained in a study must include two very significant things, namely data and data sources.

The writers used did the observation in several steps. Firstly, the writers observed the Lampung proverb orally by listening from the students or children who receive the lesson of local language in their school. In observation-based research, 'exchange' between the researcher and the research subjects is the medium that assists the transformation of ideas and thoughts into the words and activities recorded (Pickering, 2008, p. 105). The writers collected and compiled the data first, then looked at the main data. After compiling the oral and main data, the writers classified and compared the Lampung proverbs. The writers used the analysis of the breakdown of the source domain and the target domain with Great Chain of Being Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, pp. 162–173) which the author describes in Figure 1.

The sorting technique that the writer chose is referential sorting power, translational sorting power, and orthographic sorting power (Sudaryanto, 2015). The data collection technique was carried out by purposive sampling or deliberately chosen based on the consideration that the Lampung *Nyow* dialect proverb represents the use of proverbs in general in Lampung society.
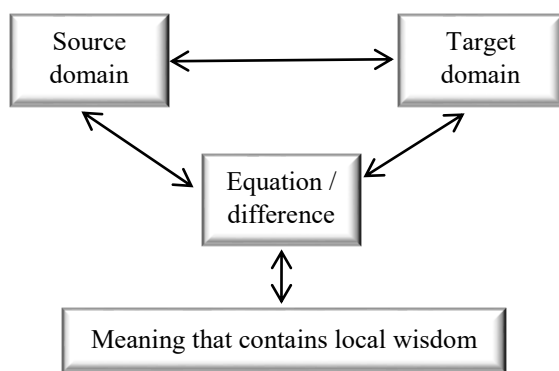
Figure 1 Source domain and target domain proverbs.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Proverbs can be said to be the result of the culture of a particular community that has a collective knowledge background and is embedded in the mind. Like other regions in the archipelago, Lampung also has proverbs that are full of noble values of local wisdom and culture and deserve to be known by the younger generation. Cognitive perspective sees the causal relationship between language and thought (Lyons, 1995). There are two kinds of cognition obtained from a person's personal experience and culture (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The way the human mind works is closely related to life experience so that every utterance is the result of cognition that arises based on things that have been experienced by humans (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 as cited in Rahardian, 2018).

Figure 1 explains that the Lampung proverbs construct from source domain and target domain. Most of them are the metaphors. There are the equations and differences of the concept which have a local wisdom meaning. The source domain in proverbs in the form of nouns is further divided into several parts consisting of animate and inanimate objects. The proverb *akik pakkal no mak metegh* 'while the base is not sweet' which means 'old children alone don't work, let alone the youngest child' implies the existence of a special feature of Lampung custom which places the elder child/eldest child as an important entity in *adat*. The word *pakkal* in the proverb is a source domain which means 'base', namely the beginning of a plant that lives, as the target domain. Regarding to learning local wisdom in children, it can be interpreted that everything that starts with something good and meets people's expectations in general, will become the next smooth road. In line with the thinking of Lakoff and Johnson, humans use the source domain to find out abstract concepts in the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The concept of heavy stone as a source domain has certain implications for the meaning of human degrees. The proverb contains a moral message or advice so that children have a strong enough mentality to face the

reality in their future lives. In Indonesian, these proverbs are also often taught as a form of teaching towards mutual respect for the culture of other community groups. The source domain is in the form of *apui* 'fire' which is correlated with the sense of being hot, flaming, burning, and destroying.

Lampung people, especially those with the *Nyow* dialect, believe that good character must be the main principle in life. The proverb *gegoh aseu/kuyuk jamo kucing* 'like a cat and a dog' means 'always fighting' which is generally known by the public. Dogs and cats, which are the source domain, are metaphors for human nature, which mean strength, victorious, and fierce, as well as being gentle, sweet, obedient, and fun. Proverb *gegoh nilingken wai* 'like pouring the water' means 'fluently without a hitch'. This proverb teaches good deeds. Children are taught to do everything according to the enforced laws, as the law of gravity is reflected in the word *nilingken* 'pour' in the proverb.

The proverb *gegoh wai diunggak bulung tales* 'like water on talas/taro leaves' means 'difficult to manage'. As the common Indonesian proverb "like water on taro leaves" which means 'difficult to manage, unable to unite, there are distances and barriers to be reconciled', this proverb implies that there is a nature that is not easy to unite. The moral message for children is to be able to adjust in society and to be easy to adapt.

The source domain is an entity that has the characteristics of not breaking if it is weak and does not break if it is loose, implying the meaning of a solid entity and a flexible entity, for example, wood that is solid and can be broken and ropes that are flexible and can be broken. The proverb means 'acting like a capable person, but not being able to'. The concept of the *babak* 'skin' process is tough, strong, and has prestige as a source domain which is interpreted as wealth, power, and a good name. In relation to learning the local wisdom of the Lampung people, children are taught to be egalitarian, honest, and do not like to make things up that they do not have. '

Proverbs, in general, represent the concept of thinking that applies in society, people who are older in age are usually used as role models, and their words are advice, but their strength is less strong. The general concept depicted in the proverb implies a form of appreciation and respect for anyone. In relation to learning local wisdom, children are taught to have mutual respect, and love in social life. The conceptual meaning which is the target domain of the proverb is people who are older, but not yet fully mature. In relation to learning local wisdom, children are taught to always learn to recognize concepts in society. The conceptual meaning reflected in the target domain is bad luck. Regarding learning local wisdom, children are taught and encouraged to prepare themselves by learning various things so as not to encounter repeated misfortunes in their lives.

The components contained in the Lampung proverbs consist of lexicons that have metaphorical elements in the position of the source domain which in the communal knowledge of the Lampung people have properties as possessed by humans and the entities that surround them. Some of the proverbs in this article use similes or associations embodied in the word *gegoh* 'like. This implies that there is a metaphor attached to the Lampung proverb that reflects the existing culture and local wisdom.

The source domain in proverbs in the form of nouns is further divided into several parts consisting of animate and inanimate objects. Inanimate objects such as *batteu* 'stone', *biduk* 'boat', *apui* 'fire', *wai* 'water', *uwok* 'bran', *lumpugh* 'mud', *ghah* 'blood', *appin* 'diaper', *kapak* 'ax', *beliung* 'big ax', *tanoh* 'land', *aghei* 'pole', *bayuk* 'basket', *asok* 'smoke', *seghek* 'needle', *ulek* 'pool', *babak* 'skin', *uyah* 'salt', *sabuk* 'palm fiber', *ujan* 'rain', *sekinknife*', *asahan* 'knife sharpener', *ubat* 'medicine', *culuk* 'forefinger', *lekung* 'throat', *talei* 'rope', *daging* 'flesh/meat', *sesam* 'fermented pickle', *panggang* 'grill', *benang* 'yarn', *ghilang* 'palm branch', *puluk* 'sap', *cawou* 'words', *umungan* 'utterance', *tenagou* 'power', occupy a role in the source domain that contain metaphors and have similar characteristics to humans.

The nouns in the form of living things used in these proverbs consist of elements of humans, animals, and plants, namely *perwatin* 'traditional figure', *mulei* 'girl', *Tuan lebai* 'the leader', *rajou* 'king', and *aghuk* 'orphan' (human element). There is also a source domain in the form of nouns originating from flora and fauna, among others, *aseu/kuyuk* 'dog', *kucing* 'cat', *gaghak* 'crab', *bohou* 'crocodile', *keghou* 'monkey', *kambing* 'goat', *kutteu* 'flea', and *manok* 'chicken'. The plant elements consist of *bulung tales* 'taro leaves', *ibung* 'young bamboo', *ghuppun* 'bamboo clumps', *batang* 'trees', and *benasou* 'jackfruit'.

4. CONCLUSSION

Lexicons contained in these proverbs become symbols that have the characteristics of being hard, soft, flowing, hot, cold, and so on. In local knowledge, these things are certainly embedded in the minds and beliefs of the community. The similarity of nature of these objects will be easily understood by children when learning the language and culture of Lampung. Proverbs in the Lampung language contain several semantic elements which are quite complex. Some proverbs also have the same concept as proverbs in Indonesian. This reflects the similarity of the concept of thinking and the same sensory experience in Indonesian society. The metaphorical element in the source domain becomes the reference for the target domain which is full of meaning. Noble values and local wisdom in the form of appeals, criticisms and advice are reflected in those proverbs. The Lampung proverbs are also related to *piil pesengiri* which contains

the Lampung people's philosophy of life which can be used as a medium for learning local wisdom for children. However, this is certainly inseparable from the competence and creativity of teachers or parents in transferring values to children.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This article is the result of the collaboration of two researchers from the Center for Language, Literature and Community Research, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN). The first author contributed to the section on providing data, introduction, literature review, discussion, and conclusion. The second author contributes on the methodology, discussion, and conclusions. The contributions of the two authors complement each other's articles. All authors declare that they have equal contributions as the main contributors. They have read and approved the final paper.

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